



# **Progress Report on the Office of Early Childhood Development**

**Presented to the  
Virginia Board of Education  
April 29, 2009**

**Ms. Kathy Glazer, Director  
Office of Early Childhood Development**

# Virginia's Office of Early Childhood Development

- Launched July 1, 2008
- Will maximize opportunities for Virginia's children to reach kindergarten healthy and prepared for school success
- Spans the Departments of Education and Social Services and will link to the Department of Health
- Serves as a unique cross-agency governance model that reflects the multi-faceted continuum of children's growth and development

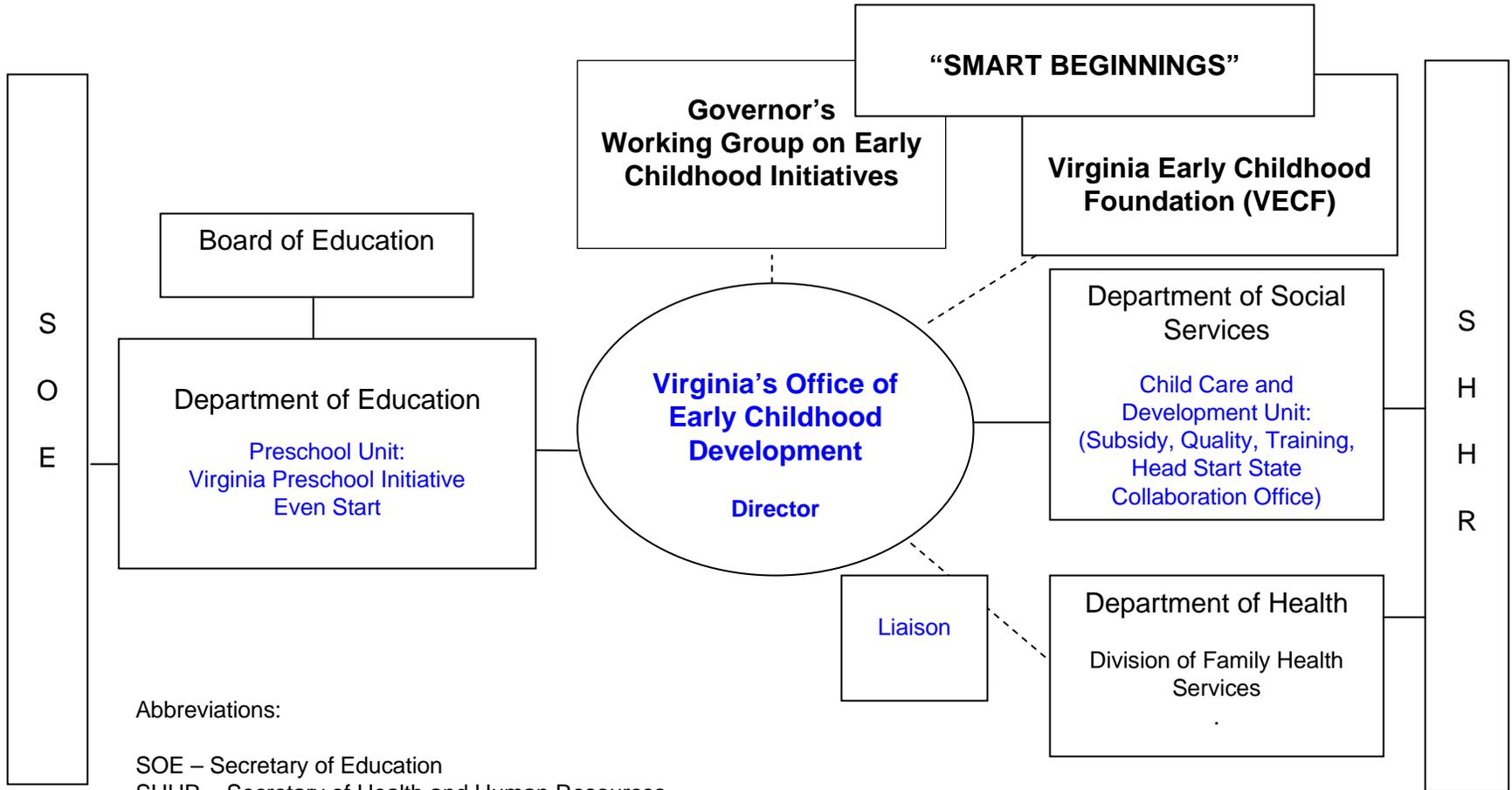
# Virginia's Office of Early Childhood Development

- Incorporates existing staff, functions, programs, and funding streams from:
  - The preschool unit at the DOE (3 staff members) and
  - The child care subsidy program, quality initiatives, and Head Start State Collaboration Office at the DSS (25 staff members).
- Focuses on access, quality, and accountability

# Objectives

- Interagency coordination and program alignment
- Development of a coordinated professional development system for the early childhood work force
- Establishment of an integrated data system to better inform policy, programming, and budget decisions

# Virginia's Early Childhood Initiatives



Abbreviations:

SOE – Secretary of Education

SHHR – Secretary of Health and Human Resources

# Virginia's Early Childhood Initiatives

**SMART BEGINNINGS** (partnership between Governor's Working Group on Early Childhood Initiatives and the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation\*)

- Virginia's Plan for Smart Beginnings
- Virginia's Star Quality Initiative (QRIS)

*\*The Virginia Early Childhood Foundation is a 501 (c) (3) created in December, 2005 which provides grants for early childhood systems-building to local communities using a blend of public and private funds.*

## **GOVERNOR'S WORKING GROUP ON EARLY CHILDHOOD INITIATIVES**

- School Readiness Task Force
- Professional Development Initiative
- Home Visiting Consortium

*The Governor's Working Group was created in August 2006 and is a multi-agency council with the purpose of coordinating early childhood programs and services across agencies and sectors at the policy level.*

# Virginia's Plan for Smart Beginnings

- Comprehensive Strategic Plan
- Purpose: All children arrive at school healthy and ready to learn
- Five Goal Areas
  - Infrastructure
  - Parent Education
  - Early Care and Education
  - Health
  - Public Engagement
- Co-led by OECD and Virginia Early Childhood Foundation
- Data Accountability

# Virginia's Star Quality Initiative

## *Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)*

- Voluntary, market-driven strategy for both private centers and public preschool classrooms
- A method to assess, improve and communicate the level of quality in early care and education settings/programs: child care, Head Start, and the Virginia Preschool Initiative
- Administered as a partnership between the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation and the Office of Early Childhood Development
- Rating based on observation and documentation review displayed on a 5-star scale
- A mentor/coach helps programs develop a quality improvement plan based on the rater's observations and provides technical assistance

# School Readiness Task Force

Building from Virginia's Definition of School Readiness:  
*(Adopted by BOE April 2008)*

- Publication of *Virginia School Readiness Report*
- Development and pilot of a self-assessment tool for "ready schools"
- Exploration of a comprehensive child inventory

# Professional Development Initiative

- 18-month initiative
- Develop recommendations for coordinated system to ensure a continuum of high quality pre-service, in-service, and development opportunities for early childhood professionals
- Steering committee chaired by Bob Pianta
- Served by subcommittees for Access, Quality, Accountability, and Infrastructure

# DSS Child Care Subsidy Program Transformation

- Serves 55,000 children and 31,000 families at approximately \$124 million this year
- Provides child care assistance to low-income families so they can work or receive training on their path to self sufficiency
- Strengthens school readiness services to the most at-risk children by focusing on quality of care
- Integrates quality rating and improvement system

# For More Information

Ms. Kathy Glazer, Director  
Office of Early Childhood Development  
Departments of Education and Social Services

[Kathy.Glazer@dss.virginia.gov](mailto:Kathy.Glazer@dss.virginia.gov)

(804) 726-7124

# **2008 School Readiness Report**

**Prepared by the  
Virginia School Readiness Task Force**

**December 2008**

## 2008 Virginia School Readiness Report Executive Summary

A top priority for Virginia's policy makers, early childhood educators, and researchers is to ensure that young children are provided opportunities and experiences that prepare them to enter school ready to learn. Virginia's definition of school readiness focuses not only on whether a child has acquired basic skills in areas of literacy, mathematics, science, history, social science, physical and motor development, and personal and social development, but also on the capacities of families, schools and communities to best support children's acquisition of these skills. The 2008 Virginia School Readiness Report, prepared by the Virginia School Readiness Task Force, summarizes recent statewide efforts to promote school readiness in Virginia in three areas—*developing infrastructure* to support a comprehensive strategy to improve school readiness, *conducting research* about access to and quality of preschool in Virginia, and *creating resources* to guide school readiness improvement efforts. The major findings from the report are summarized below.

- **Infrastructure to support a comprehensive strategy to improve school readiness in Virginia has been recently established**, including the creation of the Governor's Working Group on Early Childhood Initiatives and Virginia's Office of Early Childhood Development. These governance components oversee and coordinate comprehensive initiatives including the work of the School Readiness Task Force, Professional Development Task Force, Home Visiting Consortium, and the Star Quality Advisory Team.
- **Studies indicate that the Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI) has positive effects on children's school readiness**, as reported by statewide studies of VPI conducted by Virginia's Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) and the PALS study team at UVA.
- **Access to preschool in Virginia is lowest for children living in poverty**, as reported in a study conducted by the UVA Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service.
- **It is feasible to expand access to VPI through community/private preschool partnerships, local school readiness collaboratives, and braided funding streams**, as found in a study of the VPI Pilot project.
- **A preschool teacher professional development program improved the quality of VPI classrooms and children's school readiness**, as reported in evaluations of the impacts of MyTeachingPartner conducted by the Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning (CASTL) at UVA.
- **The Virginia Star Quality Rating System was created** to support continuous quality improvement and has been pilot tested in 186 preschool classrooms. This year, 350 classrooms in 13 communities will be assessed.
- **A comprehensive statewide definition of school readiness has been created** by the Virginia School Readiness Task Force and endorsed in 2008 by the Governor's Working Group on Early Childhood Initiatives and the Virginia Board of Education.
- **Resources have been created for Virginia's early childhood educators, program administrators, and parents to improve school readiness**, including the following documents and web-based resources: *Milestones for Child Development*, *Solving the Preschool Puzzle*, *Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals*, *Virginia's Preschool Curriculum Review Rubric and Planning Tool*, *Alignment of Teacher Competencies*, *Grant Project Templates*, and *Early Childhood Career Web site*.

**2008 Virginia School Readiness Report**  
*Prepared by the Virginia School Readiness Task Force*  
December 2008

When children enter kindergarten with basic skills in the areas of literacy, mathematics, science, history, social science, physical and motor development, and personal and social development, they have a much greater chance of achieving success later in school and into adulthood. Children's school readiness depends upon their opportunities within communities, classrooms and families that support development of these skills, and one of the Commonwealth's top priorities is to ensure that Virginia's 105,000 entering kindergartners each year start school ready to learn. The commitment to school readiness in Virginia is evident in numerous statewide efforts to promote opportunities within families, schools, and communities that support children's development of school readiness skills. The 2008 Virginia School Readiness Report is a compendium of recent work related to school readiness in Virginia that is intended to be a useful resource that informs policy makers, researchers, preschool administrators and educators about recent initiatives, research findings, and resources to promote school readiness. The report was prepared by the Virginia School Readiness Task Force, a diverse group of stakeholders including the Superintendent of Public Instruction and other representatives from the Department of Education; the Board of Education; the Department of Social Services; local city councils, school divisions, and early childhood development offices and providers; the PALS office and Virginia's universities and community colleges; the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation; and the Council on Virginia's Future.

The report is divided into three sections that describe efforts to promote school readiness in Virginia related to 1) *statewide infrastructure* to support a comprehensive strategy to improve school readiness, 2) *research* about access to and the quality of preschool in Virginia, and 3) *resources* to guide school readiness improvement efforts. Within each section, brief summaries of each effort and web-links for more information are provided.

### **Statewide Infrastructure to Improve School Readiness**

Statewide infrastructure is needed to support a comprehensive strategy to improve school readiness in Virginia. The initiatives described in this section provide a forum for collaboration for diverse partners; promote dissemination of information for researchers, educators, policymakers and practitioners; and promote awareness of the current issues in early childhood that impact school readiness. They have resulted in multiple strategies for helping programs to partner with local agencies, which in turn helps with efficient program delivery. Many of these collaborative efforts help early childhood educators in their ability to plan and deliver high quality programs and to find training that will help them enhance outcomes for children.

***Virginia's Office of Early Childhood Development.*** Virginia's Office of Early Childhood Development, which spans the Departments of Education and Social Services and links to the Department of Health, was launched for operation July 1, 2008 to maximize opportunities for Virginia's children to reach kindergarten healthy and prepared for school success. The Office's objectives include interagency coordination and program alignment, development of a coordinated professional development system for the early childhood workforce, and establishment of an integrated data system to better inform policy, programming, and budget decisions.

<http://www.education.virginia.gov/Initiatives/EarlyChildhood/GovWorkingGroup.cfm>

***Governor's Working Group on Early Childhood Initiatives.*** The Working Group was created through an executive directive by Governor Kaine in August, 2006, with the purpose of coordinating executive branch efforts on early childhood programs and strengthening public and private programs. The working group, chaired by the Secretary of Education, brings together high-level staff from cabinet offices and state agencies in the areas of Education, Health and Human Resources, Economic Development, Finance and Policy. The Working Group has provided leadership for initiating the following efforts — the Star Quality Initiative, the Home Visiting Consortium, the School Readiness Task Force, and the Early Childhood

Professional Development Initiative — that are designed to improve school readiness in Virginia.  
<http://www.education.virginia.gov/Initiatives/EarlyChildhood/GovWorkingGroup.cfm>

**The Virginia Early Childhood Foundation.** The Foundation is a public-private partnership, founded in 2005. The Foundation provides grants, training and technical assistance to local and regional Smart Beginnings initiatives. The Foundation collaborates with state government, the business community, parents and early childhood leaders to implement long-term strategies for improving school-readiness for all young children, ages birth to five.  
<http://www.vecf.org>

**Smart Beginnings Strategic Plan.** The Governor's Working Group and the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation have partnered to co-lead the implementation of Virginia's Plan for Smart Beginnings, a statewide comprehensive strategic plan to strengthen, integrate, and evaluate early childhood services, infrastructure, and public engagement efforts across the Commonwealth. The plan focuses on five overarching goals in the areas of Governance and Finance, Family Support and Education, Early Care and Education, Health, and Public Engagement, and it serves as a roadmap for Virginia's school readiness vision.  
[www.education.virginia.gov/Initiatives/EarlyChildhood/Virginias\\_Plan\\_Smart\\_Beg.doc](http://www.education.virginia.gov/Initiatives/EarlyChildhood/Virginias_Plan_Smart_Beg.doc)

**School Readiness Task Force.** The school readiness task force was convened to focus on developing an effective system for assessing and evaluating the school readiness of Virginia's children. The task force has proposed recommendations to promote statewide data collection efforts to better inform educational policies and classroom practices, and developed Virginia's Definition of School Readiness.  
<http://www.education.virginia.gov/Initiatives/EarlyChildhood/GovWorkingGroup.cfm>

**Professional Development Task Force.** The professional development task force will make recommendations for a coordinated system to ensure a continuum of high quality professional development opportunities for the early childhood workforce in Virginia. The task force will focus on key components of a professional development system: access, quality, accountability, infrastructure, and funding.  
<http://www.education.virginia.gov/Initiatives/EarlyChildhood/GovWorkingGroup.cfm>

**Home Visiting Consortium.** The Consortium brings together all state-funded early childhood home visiting programs to discuss home visiting services in Virginia. The group has developed a strong collaborative model which values the unique features each program brings and reduces duplication and gaps in service coverage. The Consortium is developing and piloting common training modules for home visitors of all programs, and is planning for the collection and utilization of common data elements to better inform program and policy.  
<http://www.education.virginia.gov/Initiatives/EarlyChildhood/GovWorkingGroup.cfm>

## Research on School Readiness in Virginia

Five recent studies related to school readiness in Virginia have been conducted; the results of which identify: 1) benefits of the Virginia Preschool Initiative on children's school readiness; 2) concerns about access to preschool in Virginia for children from economically disadvantaged homes, and 3) promise in methods to improve access to and the quality of preschool programs in Virginia.

**Virginia's Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) finds positive effects of VPI participation.** In 2007, the Virginia General Assembly commissioned a study of the Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI) by JLARC. The JLARC study found positive effects of the program on children's school readiness. Specifically, VPI classrooms tend to provide positive learning environments with high levels of student engagement; children in VPI classrooms show growth in literacy skills across the preschool year (from fall to spring); children from VPI classrooms tend to score higher on kindergarten literacy assessments than other kindergartners; and kindergarten teachers and elementary principals report that VPI graduates are well-prepared socially and academically for kindergarten and later elementary schooling.

These findings identify the important effects of high quality program participation on the literacy components of school readiness. The study also identified seven actions which could be taken to more consistently achieve high quality in VPI classrooms.

<http://jlarc.state.va.us/Reports/Rpt364.pdf>

***UVA Study of VPI and Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS) for Kindergarten and preschool students finds positive effects of VPI participation.*** The PALS is used to assess the literacy skills of children who attend kindergarten and students in VPI and other publicly funded preschool programs. Results from PALS-K screenings show that the percentage of students who were identified as needing extra support for learning to read has dropped each year since 2004, with 20 percent identified in 2004 down to 17 percent identified in 2007. Also, a smaller percentage of students who attend public preschool programs are identified in kindergarten as needing extra support to become proficient readers as compared to the kindergarten population as a whole. For example, in the fall of 2007, 11 percent of students screened with PALS in Kindergarten who attended publicly funded preschool in the prior year were identified as needing extra help as compared to 17 percent of all kindergarten children who were screened. Over time, results from PALS-K assessments also show that each year since 2004, a smaller percentage of children participating in public preschool have been identified in kindergarten as needing extra help as compared to the previous year. Results from the PALS-PreK assessments in spring 2008 show that between 85.4 percent and 94.0 percent of VPI preschoolers were within the developmental ranges across all six of the assessed areas: name writing, alphabet knowledge, beginning sounds, rhyme, concepts of print, and nursery rhyme awareness. This reflects an increase from spring 2007 results, which ranged from 82.2 percent and 91.3 percent across the six tasks. Disaggregated data for each year shows that preschool students who participate in VPI and Title I preschool programs are more likely to meet or exceed the developmental ranges on the PALS-PreK assessments, as compared to students who attend other publicly funded preschool programs. The data available do not determine whether these outcomes can be attributed to differences in the programs or differences in the student populations served by various public preschool programs.

<http://pals.virginia.edu>

***Barriers are identified in access to public and private preschool for Virginia's low-income children.***

In 2006, the University of Virginia's Weldon Cooper Center used the United States Census Bureau's American Community Survey to conduct a study of the 105,000 four-year-old children living in Virginia in 2005. Results showed almost 43 percent of those four-year-olds (45,000) were not enrolled in any type of preschool program. Enrollment in preschool was highest among those children from families earning more than three times the poverty threshold (70 percent) while those below the poverty level were enrolled at the lowest rate (40 percent). Four-year-olds not enrolled in preschool were similar to those enrolled in public preschool programs. Both groups tended to come from single parent households, to live in or near poverty, and to have mothers with less education than those enrolled in private preschool programs. These results suggest that access to high quality early learning continues to be a barrier for the state's low-income children.

[http://www.coopercenter.org/demographics/sitefiles/documents/pdfs/numberscount/virginias\\_4-year-olds.pdf](http://www.coopercenter.org/demographics/sitefiles/documents/pdfs/numberscount/virginias_4-year-olds.pdf)

***VPI Access and Feasibility Study indicates that diverse funding is effective in program delivery.*** The Virginia Preschool Pilot Initiative was designed as a one-year experiment to examine the feasibility of increasing access to VPI for more children at risk of school failure by offering state-funded prekindergarten using specific strategies: a) local school readiness collaborative work groups; b) "braiding" of multiple categorical funding streams in programs; and c) partnership among public schools, Head Start programs, and private child care providers. Approximately 280 children participated in some portion of the pilot program during 2007-2008. The results of the pilot demonstrated that diverse preschool delivery is feasible and appears associated with benefits for children at-risk for school difficulties, narrowing the pre-literacy achievement gap between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers. State guidelines and funding for staff positions and technical support appear to be necessary to help localities blend funding, oversee programs, improve and maintain quality, and accurately collect records. These factors have been

important in successfully developing a mixed delivery model of high-quality prekindergarten for at-risk children in Virginia, and maximizing entry for preschoolers using diverse delivery methods and multiple funding streams.

<http://leg2.state.va.us/dls/h&sdocs.nsf/682def7a6a969fbf85256ec100529ebd/231cd2c4ea5eeee6852574cc004ad11a?OpenDocument>

***A professional development program for VPI teachers improved classroom quality and children's school readiness.*** Over 200 teachers in the Virginia Preschool Initiative participated in the MyTeachingPartner professional development program designed to improve the quality of classroom interactions and children's development of school readiness skills. Teachers received access to a Web site and participated in consultation designed to improve the quality of teachers' interactions with children in classrooms. A study of the effects of the program was conducted by the Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning at the University of Virginia, and results demonstrate that the teaching consultation had a positive influence on classroom quality and children's school readiness. These findings suggest that this particular professional development program has the potential to provide teachers with skills that have a positive impact on children in their classrooms.

[www.myteachingpartner.net](http://www.myteachingpartner.net)

### Resources to Improve School Readiness in Virginia

The following resources have been developed for parents, educators, and preschool programs to improve school readiness. The resources are designed to increase knowledge about school readiness and improve the quality of children's experiences in preschool programs.

***Virginia Star Quality Rating System Initiative.*** Virginia's Star Quality Initiative (a Quality Rating and Improvement System) was created to offer a market-based solution to facilitate quality consistency among early childhood programs, support continuous quality improvement in partnership with public and private early education providers, and encourage a continuum of care and education throughout various provider settings, so that all children arrive in kindergarten ready to succeed. The Star Quality Initiative was piloted during the 2007-2008 school year, with 186 classrooms observed by 20 trained Star Quality Raters. Through a corporate grant from Capital One and generous local support, the pilot built on existing local efforts to promote quality in both public and private early childhood settings in 14 Virginia communities. The purpose of the initiative in phase one was not to assign and promote Star ratings, but to test and evaluate the standard and ratings process to ensure reliability and validity. While Star ratings were not publicized, internal data showed a nearly-perfect bell curve distribution of Star levels among programs; 44 percent of programs fell at the 3-Star level, with the majority of those remaining earning 2 or 4 Stars and very few at the 1- or 5-Star levels. Data also indicated a 90 percent rate of consistency between Star Quality Raters.

[www.education.virginia.gov/Initiatives/EarlyChildhood/gris\\_overview.doc](http://www.education.virginia.gov/Initiatives/EarlyChildhood/gris_overview.doc)

[http://www.smartbeginnings.org/index.asp?Type=B\\_BASIC&SEC={56DE82A5-9F30-4390-B6CD-4C90C8D2D282}](http://www.smartbeginnings.org/index.asp?Type=B_BASIC&SEC={56DE82A5-9F30-4390-B6CD-4C90C8D2D282})

***Virginia's Definition of School Readiness.*** In 2008, the School Readiness Task Force created a comprehensive definition of school readiness that was endorsed in 2008 by the Governor's Working Group on Early Childhood Initiatives and by the Board of Education. Virginia's definition of school readiness focuses not only on whether a child has acquired basic skills, but also on the capacities of families, schools, and communities that best support children's acquisition of these skills. This definition provides a common framework for understanding and promoting school readiness across Virginia.

<http://www.education.virginia.gov/Initiatives/EarlyChildhood/GovWorkingGroup.cfm>

***Milestones of Child Development.*** The Milestones of Child Development is a resource resulting from the work of Virginia's Alignment Project. This multi-disciplinary team of public and private partners worked together to offer guides to assist adults in their roles with young children. The *Milestones* are a set of child indicators and strategies for adults designed to support the growth and development of young children from

birth to kindergarten entry. It integrates and supports Head Start standards and the Virginia Preschool Initiative's Foundation Blocks.

[http://www.education.virginia.gov/Initiatives/EarlyChildhood/MCD\\_6\\_07.pdf](http://www.education.virginia.gov/Initiatives/EarlyChildhood/MCD_6_07.pdf)

**Solving the Preschool Puzzle.** In the spring of 2008, seven regional forums were held in communities across the Commonwealth to provide information on the Governor's pre-K proposal, legislative and budget action, and best practice strategies for community planning and service delivery. Presented by the Governor's Working Group in partnership with United Way Success By 6, the forums discussed the latest information on VPI and state-level policy and program activities and provided opportunities for regions to share information and best practices with each other. To inform the discussion, a resource guide for public and private early childhood leaders, entitled "Solving the Preschool Puzzle," was developed and distributed. The guide offers detailed information about collaborative, innovative approaches to deliver early childhood services, samples of Memoranda of Understanding to demonstrate how programs have partnered and braided funding streams, and contact information for individuals across the state that are already employing these best practices in their programs.

<http://www.education.virginia.gov/Initiatives/EarlyChildhood/StartStrong/PreschoolPuzzle.pdf>

**Virginia's Foundation Blocks for Early Learning.** From 2001 to 2006, the Department of Education developed the standards, *Virginia's Foundation Blocks for Early Learning*. The purpose of the Foundation Blocks for Early Learning is to provide early childhood educators a set of standards for all content areas, as well as indicators of success for entering kindergarten students pertaining to their competencies in literacy, mathematics, science, history, social science, and the more recently added blocks covering personal and social development and physical and motor development. A committee of Department of Education specialists, literacy and mathematics professors from Virginia universities, and public and private preschool teachers and administrators developed the standards using current scientifically based research. Standards reflect a consensus regarding children's conceptual learning, acquisition of basic knowledge, and participation in meaningful and relevant learning experiences.

[http://www-prod.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Instruction/Elem\\_M/FoundationBlocks.pdf](http://www-prod.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Instruction/Elem_M/FoundationBlocks.pdf)

**Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals.** The Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals is a resource developed as a part of Virginia's Alignment Project. The Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals includes standards for competent practice, identifying what early childhood professionals must know, be able to do, and care about to provide quality early care and education.

[http://www.education.virginia.gov/Initiatives/EarlyChildhood/Comp\\_6\\_07.pdf](http://www.education.virginia.gov/Initiatives/EarlyChildhood/Comp_6_07.pdf)

**Virginia's Preschool Curriculum Review Rubric and Planning Tool.** In 2006, the Virginia Board of Education received a three-year grant from the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) for state planning in early childhood education. *Virginia's Preschool Curriculum Review Rubric and Planning Tool*, one product of this grant work, is a valuable resource for preschool teachers, curriculum specialists, preschool directors, and other staff members responsible for educating young children. The rubric can be used to assist early childhood educators in the selection and development of curricula that align with *Virginia's Foundation Blocks for Early Learning*. The rubric is carefully designed to include the five domains essential to early childhood development, which are also indicators of school readiness: cognitive and general knowledge, language development, social and emotional development, physical well being and motor development, and approaches to learning.

[http://www.doe.virginia.gov/VDOE/Instruction/Elem\\_M/preschool\\_rubric.pdf](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/VDOE/Instruction/Elem_M/preschool_rubric.pdf)

**Virginia School Readiness Evaluation and Education Grant Project Templates.** In order to improve school readiness in Virginia, the Virginia School Readiness Task Force has developed a list of pilot projects for communities, foundations and corporate donors. Each project is designed to be discrete and also to have a clear relationship to the goal of improving school readiness for Virginia children. The goal of this effort is to provide local communities with grant templates they can use for local projects and to help each

community design its project so that it can also be utilized across the Commonwealth of Virginia.

<http://www.education.virginia.gov/Initiatives/EarlyChildhood/GovWorkingGroup.cfm>

**Virginia Performs.** Virginia Performs provides policy makers, citizens, government and businesses an easy-to-use portal to information and data about Virginia and its localities. School readiness is one of 46 high-level quality of life indicators measured on Virginia Performs.

<http://www.vaperforms.virginia.gov/i-schoolReadiness.php>

**Alignment of Teacher Competencies.** Teacher competencies for the PreK-3 and PreK-6 teaching endorsements were aligned with Virginia's *Foundation Blocks for Early Learning: Comprehensive Standards for Four-Year-Olds* and the recently produced document from the state's Early Childhood Education's Alignment Project, *Milestones of Child Development* and *Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals*.

<http://www.doe.virginia.gov/VDOE/Compliance/TeacherED/nulicvr.pdf>.

**Early Childhood Career Web Site and Degree Transfer Agreements.** The NASBE committee worked with Virginia's Community College System (VCCS) to develop a web site and brochure to assist future early childhood professionals with understanding educational opportunities for a career in early childhood education. This coincides with the launching of a VCCS common degree in early childhood education. The requirements for the Associate's in Applied Sciences (A.A.S) in early childhood development include the same courses and portfolio items at all of the Virginia Community College System institutions as of fall 2008. This common degree, aligned with Virginia's *Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals*, will help to further facilitate the unique transfer programs with four-year colleges and universities providing opportunities for students seeking applied degrees that lead them straight to the workforce. Virginia Community Colleges have agreements with Norfolk State University, George Mason University, Virginia Commonwealth University and Averett University. The web site is regularly updated to reflect articulated transfer agreements, and information regarding these programs was distributed to early childhood stakeholders across the state including high school guidance counselors, career coordinators, technical education coordinators, VCCS representatives, and Virginia Preschool Initiative coordinators. A copy of the brochure and the transfer agreements are on the Web site.

<http://www.vccs.edu/Students/Transfer/tabid/106/Default.aspx>

<http://myfuture.vccs.edu/Portals/0/ContentAreas/Transfer/k12-brochure-page1n2.pdf>.

## Virginia School Readiness Task Force Committee Members

### **The Honorable Rob Krupicka (Chair) Councilman, Alexandria City Council**

Mark Allan  
Director of the Office of Elementary Instruction  
Virginia Department of Education

Judy Apostolico-Buck  
Early Childhood Coordinator  
Arlington County Public Schools

Louise Canfield  
Early Head Start, Child Development Resources

Anthony Conyers  
Commissioner, Va. Dept. of Social Services

Renee Dino  
Supervisor of Early Childhood Programs  
Williamsburg-James City Public Schools

Mark Emblidge  
Chair, Virginia Board of Education

Teresa Harris  
Professor of Early Childhood Education  
James Madison University

Jim Hawdon  
Associate Professor of Sociology  
Virginia Tech

Karen Hughes  
Director, The Campagna Center

Anne Hyslop  
State Initiatives Coordinator  
Virginia Early Childhood Foundation

Marcia Invernizzi  
Director, PALS Project  
Curry School of Education, University of Virginia

Deborah Jonas  
Exec. Dir. for Research & Strategic Planning  
Virginia Department of Education

Scott Kizner  
Superintendent, Martinsville Public Schools

Kuperminc, Michelle  
Assistant Professor of Pediatrics  
Kluge Children's Rehabilitation Center

The Honorable Thomas R. Morris  
Secretary of Education

Jane Kusiak  
Executive Director, Council on Virginia's Future

Tim Landrum  
Senior Scientist, PALS Project  
Curry School of Education, University of Virginia

Andy Mashburn  
Senior Scientist  
Curry School of Education, University of Virginia

Bob Pianta  
Dean  
Curry School of Education, University of Virginia

Nancy Roberts  
Senior Advisor, Council on Virginia's Future

Bob Rotz  
Senior Division Chief  
Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission

Eleanor Saslaw  
Member, Virginia Board of Education

Christine Schull  
Associate Professor, Early Childhood Education  
Northern Virginia Community College

Linda Wallinger  
Assistant Superintendent for Instruction  
Virginia Department of Education

Patricia I. Wright  
Superintendent of Public Instruction  
Virginia Department of Education

---

Kathy Glazer  
Director, Office of Early Childhood Development  
Staff Facilitator

For additional information about the 2008 Virginia School Readiness Report,  
contact [Kathy.glazer@dss.virginia.gov](mailto:Kathy.glazer@dss.virginia.gov) or 804-726-7124.



**VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

**BRIEFING**

# **VIRGINIA PRESCHOOL INITIATIVE**

**PRESENTED TO  
THE VIRGINIA BOARD OF EDUCATION**

**APRIL 29, 2009**

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### □ PURPOSE OF THE VIRGINIA PRESCHOOL INITIATIVE

- The purpose of the Virginia Preschool Initiative is to provide quality preschool programs for at-risk four-year-olds who are unserved by Head Start programs.

### □ LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

- The 1993 *Acts of Assembly*, Chapter 994, Item 126 required the Board of Education, the Department of Education, and the Virginia Council on Child Day Care and Early Childhood Programs to conduct a study of current early childhood programs provided for at-risk children in Virginia. The results of the study were presented to the Chairmen of the Senate Finance and House Appropriations Committees on November 1, 1993.
- In 1994, the Legislative Commission on Equity in Public Education recommended the establishment of state funded, quality preschool programs for unserved at-risk four-year-olds. Research culminating from this legislative study defined the criteria for quality programs.
- The 1995 General Assembly appropriated \$10.3 million for the Virginia Preschool Initiative to begin in FY 1996. The passage of the Omnibus Education Act (HB 2542) and the Appropriation Act reinforced all components of the 1994 package, and determined a need for an initiative for at-risk four-year-olds. The legislative intent of the initiative was designed to establish a quality preschool education program for at-risk four-year-olds.
- Funding for the Virginia Preschool Initiative gradually increased as the program grew to support more at-risk children.
- The 2006 General Assembly added new language to the Appropriation Act that authorized the Virginia Department of Education to use unexpended balances of Virginia Preschool Initiative state funding each year to provide grants to qualifying divisions/localities for one-time expenses, other than capital, related to the start-up or expansion of their Virginia Preschool Initiative programs.
- The 2008 General Assembly added new language to the Appropriation Act that increased the per pupil rate from \$5,700 to \$6,000 and capped the local match requirement at 0.5000 for FY 2010. By FY 2006, 100 percent of eligible at-risk four-year-olds were included in the funding formula.

## PROGRAM INFORMATION

### □ APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

- Authorizing legislation requires the chief administrator (city manager or county administrator), in conjunction with the school division superintendent, to identify a lead agency within the division/locality as part of the VPI grant application for funds on or before May 15 each year.
- Divisions/localities must coordinate resources and funding streams to serve the greatest number of four-year-old children. Divisions/localities must demonstrate the coordination of comprehensive service providers, including schools, child-care providers, local social services agencies, Head Start, local health departments and other groups.
- Programs may be operated by public schools or community-based organizations. These entities may sub-contract for services from other providers. State funds are paid directly to school divisions or local governments.
- All applicants must:
  - Demonstrate willingness to provide a quality preschool education program that conforms to the guidelines and criteria;
  - Demonstrate collaboration and coordination with community agencies and groups identified by the lead agency as necessary for the successful delivery of comprehensive services to the children and their families;
  - Develop selection criteria based on the community's definition of at-risk; and
  - Complete an application and submit it to the Virginia Department of Education by May 15 each year and complete a verification report by October 15 each year.

### □ PROGRAM COMPONENTS

- Children are to receive a quality preschool education, which includes:
  - A curriculum aligned with the *Foundation Blocks for Early Learning* and designed to address the learning needs of young children;
  - A group size limit of 18 and a child/staff ratio of 9:1;
  - A minimum of half day for the entire school year;
  - Qualified staff; and
  - Assessment procedures.

- Parents are partners in the Virginia Preschool Initiative programs as evidenced by:
  - Their inclusion in program planning and program activities to the extent possible;
  - The planning for regular, frequent communication with individual parents and parents as a group; and
  - The availability of resource materials to them on topics such as parent-child relationships or child behavior.
- Health services for participating children required at the time of entry or during the program year include:
  - Full immunizations;
  - Vision, hearing, and dental screenings;
  - Complete physical health evaluations;
  - Periodic check-ups; and
  - Eyeglasses, hearing aids, or other assistive devices when necessary.
- Social services for the program year for families of participating children include the identification of services available from sources other than government sources that may be utilized to support families.
- Transportation services are provided for every child to and from the program and as required to receive necessary support services.

**□ RESOURCES AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**

Various resources are available to assist divisions/localities with program areas where assistance is necessary.

- Technical assistance and guidance are available to divisions by Department of Education staff as needed or requested. Each VPI program receives a site visit every other year, including a review of compliance with program requirements and specific guidance as needed.
- The University of Virginia, through the office of Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS) at the Curry School of Education, continues to provide the PALS Pre-K instrument. The screening tool provides information about students' need for additional assistance with literacy skills. The PALS office maintains a Web site at <http://pals.virginia.edu> to assist all preschool teachers in Virginia with instructional activities.
- *Virginia's Foundation Blocks for Early Learning: Comprehensive Standards for Four-Year-Olds* outline standards which establish a measurable range of skills and knowledge essential for at-risk four-year-olds to be successful in kindergarten. The

- standards assist early childhood educators in providing indicators for student success. These standards are in alignment with the Virginia Kindergarten Standards of Learning and the Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening for Kindergarten (PALS-K) instrument. The *Foundation Blocks* were revised in 2007 to incorporate additional standards in the areas of physical/motor skills and personal/social skills. ([http://www.doe.virginia.gov/VDOE/Instruction/Elem\\_M/FoundationBlocks.pdf](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/VDOE/Instruction/Elem_M/FoundationBlocks.pdf))
- *Virginia's Preschool Curriculum Review Rubric and Planning Tool*, developed in 2007, serves as a valuable resource to assist curriculum specialists and practitioners in developing appropriate curricula and/or analyzing their current curricula in regard to alignment with *Virginia's Foundation Blocks for Early Learning*. The Virginia Board of Education accepted the Curriculum Review Rubric as a report at its July 27, 2005, meeting. The *Preschool Curriculum Review Rubric and Planning Tool* can be accessed on the Virginia Department of Education's Web site at: [http://www.doe.virginia.gov/VDOE/Instruction/Elem\\_M/early.html](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/VDOE/Instruction/Elem_M/early.html).
  - *Solving the Preschool Puzzle*, developed in 2008, serves as a resource guide for public and private early childhood leaders. It offers detailed information about collaborative and innovative approaches to deliver early childhood services. *Solving the Preschool Puzzle* can be accessed at: <http://www.education.virginia.gov/Initiatives/EarlyChildhood/StartStrong/PreschoolPuzzle.pdf>
  - The School Readiness Task Force focuses on developing an effective system for assessing and evaluating the school readiness of Virginia's children. Members include the Secretary of Education and representatives from the Board of Education, Departments of Education and Social Services, the Council on Virginia's Future, the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation, local city councils and school divisions, private child care, and Virginia's community colleges and universities. The Task Force has developed a definition of school readiness, which outlines the capabilities of children, their families, schools, and communities that best promote student success. The definition, which was endorsed by the Virginia Board of Education in 2008, can be viewed at: [http://www.education.virginia.gov/Initiatives/EarlyChildhood/Virginia\\_Definition\\_of\\_School\\_Readiness.doc](http://www.education.virginia.gov/Initiatives/EarlyChildhood/Virginia_Definition_of_School_Readiness.doc)
  - The School Readiness Task Force has prepared the *2008 Virginia School Readiness Report*, which summarizes recent statewide efforts to promote school readiness in Virginia in three areas: developing infrastructure to support a comprehensive strategy to improve school readiness, conducting research about access to and quality of preschool in Virginia, and creating resources to guide school readiness improvement efforts. The report can be viewed at: <http://www.education.virginia.gov/Initiatives/EarlyChildhood/GovWorkingGroup.com>

## PARTICIPATION

### □ STUDENT PARTICIPATION

- The number of at-risk four-year-olds participating in the Virginia Preschool Initiative has increased steadily since its inception.
- Table 1 outlines the budgeted and actual participation histories of the Virginia Preschool Initiative since fiscal year 2003.

**TABLE 1. Virginia Preschool Initiative Student Participation**

Year	Calculated Number of VPI Slots in Formula <sup>1</sup>	Actual Number of VPI Slots Used <sup>6</sup>	Percentage of VPI Slots Used	Total State Share of VPI Cost (in millions) <sup>2</sup>
FY 2003	7,302	5,823	80%	\$18.1
FY 2004	7,337	5,858	80%	\$18.3
FY 2005	15,185	10,318	68%	\$34.9
FY 2006	17,042	11,343	66%	\$38.5
FY 2007	18,730	12,501	67%	\$46.2 <sup>3</sup>
FY 2008	18,929	13,125	69%	\$48.3 <sup>4</sup>
FY 2009	20,705	14,569 / 15,623 <sup>5</sup>	70% / 75% <sup>5</sup>	\$58.5 <sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>In FY 1996, the budgeted number of Virginia Preschool Initiative slots was prorated at 30 percent. From FY 1997 to FY 2004, the budgeted number of slots was prorated at 60 percent. For FY 2005, the budgeted number of Virginia Preschool Initiative slots was prorated at 90 percent. In FY 2006, all eligible unserved at-risk four-year-olds were included in the budget formula.

<sup>2</sup>The state share of payments to divisions/localities is based on the actual number of children being served as certified on the Virginia Preschool Initiative interim report that is due in October of each year. Total funding for each program is derived from the division/locality's composite index plus the required local matching funds.

<sup>3</sup>In FY 2007, the state share includes \$1.5 million in undistributed Virginia Preschool Initiative funding that was used for start-up grants to school divisions not operating a Virginia Preschool Initiative program in FY 2007 but wishing to operate in FY 2008, or for expansion grants to divisions wishing to expand their Virginia Preschool Initiative program in FY 2008.

<sup>4</sup>In FY 2008, the state share includes \$1.75 million in undistributed Virginia Preschool Initiative funding that was used for start-up or expansion grants. This funding does not include the \$1.7 million appropriated in FY 2008 for the Preschool Pilot grants summarized in this document.

<sup>5</sup>In FY 2009, the state share includes \$4.1 million in undistributed Virginia Preschool Initiative funding that was used for one-time expansion grants to serve additional at-risk four-year-olds in divisions that met one of three criteria: 1) needed additional slots/funds to hold them harmless for their FY 2008 share; 2) needed additional slots/funds to serve a minimum of nine students as a base classroom; and/or 3) needed additional slots/funds to serve additional at-risk students with preschool services if they were already receiving their full allocation.

<sup>6</sup>Represents actual number of students served for both full-time and part-time slots.

□ **DIVISION PARTICIPATION**

- The number of school divisions participating in the Virginia Preschool Initiative has increased steadily since its inception.
- For the current school year, 112 of 124 eligible divisions participate. Twelve of 136 divisions are not eligible for funding under the formula.
- Of the 112 divisions participating in VPI:
  - 63 divisions (56 percent of those participating) use 100 percent of their slot allocation.
  - 19 divisions (17 percent of participating divisions) use 76-99 percent of their slot allocation.
  - 16 divisions (14 percent of participating divisions) use 50-75 percent of their slot allocation.
  - 14 divisions (13 percent of participating divisions) use less than half of their slot allocation.

**TABLE 2. Virginia Preschool Initiative Division Participation<sup>1</sup>**

	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009
Number of divisions/localities in the Commonwealth:	136	136	136	136	136	136
Number of divisions/localities eligible for funding:	97	115	117	122	124	124
Number of participating divisions/localities:	75	90	92	101	105	112
Number of eligible, nonparticipating divisions/localities:	22	25	25	21	19	12
Number of divisions/localities not eligible:	39	21	19	14	12	12
Number of eligible children:	7,337	15,185	17,042	18,730	18,929	20,705
Number of eligible children served:	5,858	10,318	11,343	12,501	13,125	14,585

<sup>1</sup>This table does not include participation of divisions receiving one-time funds through the FY 2009 redistribution of unallocated funds.

- The majority of divisions/localities use their full allocation. Some divisions use only a partial amount. Many divisions from each of these categories report wait lists. A few divisions choose not to participate; this number has declined from 19 in FY 2008 to 12 divisions in FY 2009.

- Reasons for partial use of allocation or nonparticipation include:
  - Divisions/localities express difficulty or inability to meet the required local match;
  - Divisions/localities have insufficient space to house additional preschool classrooms in school facilities; and/or
  - In some divisions/localities there are a minimal number of students eligible for the program by state allocation formula, resulting in a program that may not be cost effective.
  
- Nine localities have 100 or more unused slots.

**TABLE 3. Divisions Leaving 100 Or More Slots Unutilized in Fiscal Year 2009**

Locality	Unused Slots/ Available Slots	Composite Index	Self-Reported Reasons for Not Using Full Allocation
Prince William County	1,053/1,089	.44	Local match
Fairfax County	1,014/1,782	.76	Local match
Henrico County	610/818	.43	Local match and space
Richmond City	570/1,451	.42	Space
Virginia Beach City	512/1,216	.37	Local match
Alexandria City	474/702	.80	Local match
Chesterfield County	417/529	.34	Local match and space
Loudoun County	163/403	.67	Space
Chesapeake City	202/506	.30	Local match and space

- Some divisions/localities are not eligible for Virginia Preschool Initiative slots under the current funding formula. Each division/locality’s free lunch participation is multiplied by the estimated number of four-year-olds in the division/locality. The number of children being served by Head Start is subtracted from this number to determine the number of Virginia Preschool Initiative student slots to be funded. In some divisions/localities the resulting number is zero; therefore the division/locality is not eligible to participate.

**TABLE 4. Fiscal Year 2009 Virginia Preschool Initiative Ineligibility**

<b>Divisions/Localities Not Eligible for FY 2009 Funding</b>	<b>Estimate of At-Risk Four-Year-Olds</b>	<b>Number of Children Served by Head Start</b>
Bath County	9	9
Buena Vista City	18	19
Colonial Beach	14	14
Craig County	15	17
Highland County	7	9
Lee County	129	141
Lexington City	9	18
Madison County	24	24
New Kent County	20	20
Norton City	13	33
Rappahannock County	11	14
Scott County	87	104
<b>Total Count: 12</b>		

- The 12 divisions/localities that are not eligible for VPI funding are serving as many or more students through Head Start than are estimated for services through the state’s VPI funding formula. Eligibility for Head Start is family income at or below 100 percent of the federal poverty level, with some allowance for serving at-risk children in families above that income range. The data suggest that the estimated number of at-risk four-year-olds may not fully reflect the need in these communities.

**TABLE 5: FY 2009 Virginia Preschool Initiative Nonparticipation**

<b>Divisions/Localities Eligible, But Not Participating</b>	<b>Self-Reported Reasons for Nonparticipation</b>	<b>Estimate of At-Risk Four-Year-Olds</b>	<b>Number of Children Served by Head Start</b>
Bland County	local match and minimal number	17	14
Fairfax City	minimal number	40	0
Frederick County	space and local match	149	62
Giles County	space	57	54
King George County	local match	46	32
Mathews County	local match	15	13
Middlesex County	local match	23	17
Poquoson City	local match	6	0
Radford City	local match	39	33
Salem City	minimal number	41	35
Sussex County	space	73	63
Westmoreland County	local match	83	6
<b>Total Count: 12</b>			

- In the localities that choose to not participate in the Virginia Preschool Initiative, Head Start programs serve only a portion of the estimated number of at-risk four-year-olds based on free-lunch eligibility. The data suggest that at-risk children in these communities may not have access to publicly funded preschool programs.

## VIRGINIA PRESCHOOL INITIATIVE PROGRAM IMPACT

### □ PARTICIPATING STUDENT PRELITERACY SKILLS

- The impact of participation in a Virginia Preschool Initiative program can be seen in results of the fall 2007 Phonological Literacy Awareness Screening (PALS) that was administered to kindergarten students. Table 6 shows that 10 percent of the students entering kindergarten who participated in a Virginia Preschool Initiative program needed intervention services in kindergarten the next school year. The statewide percentage for all kindergartners identified as needing intervention was 16.46 percent that year.

**TABLE 6. Fall 2007 Kindergarten PALS - Students Identified or Not Identified as Below Benchmark**

Preschool Program in which Student Participated	Students Identified as Not Needing Intervention Services		Students Identified as Needing Intervention Services		Total Number of Students Screened
	Number of Students	Percent of Total Number of Students	Number of Students	Percent of Total Number of Students	
VPI	8,112	90%	879	10%	8,991
VPI & Title I	1,399	91%	141	9%	1,540
Other PreK	5,014	86%	802	14%	5,816
Students' PreK Status Unknown	49,338	82%	10,759	18%	60,097

Data Source: University of Virginia, PALS Office, January 21, 2009

### □ PARTICIPATING STUDENT PERFORMANCE ON THIRD-GRADE STANDARDS OF LEARNING (SOL)

- In order to understand the correlation between participation in publicly funded preschool and performance on third-grade Standards of Learning test scores, the Virginia Department of Education identified 3,466 economically disadvantaged third graders in the FY 2007 school year who had participated in publicly funded preschool programs in the FY 2003 school year. These programs may include VPI, Head Start, Title I, and Early Childhood Special Education. The analysis conducted by the Virginia Department of Education showed that participating students had pass rates on the third grade SOL tests that were four to five points higher than those of economically disadvantaged peers whose preschool status was unknown.

The difference was across the reading, mathematics, history and social sciences, and science assessments.

□ **FINDINGS OF THE JOINT LEGISLATIVE AUDIT AND REVIEW COMMISSION 2007 REPORT**

- The 2007 General Assembly required the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) to review the Virginia Preschool Initiative. Regarding the impact on participating students, JLARC noted in its 2007 report to JLARC, the Governor, and the General Assembly, that:

*Analysis of preschool and kindergarten literacy test results showed a strong association between VPI participation and test scores. VPI students performed better than predicted on these tests and had higher kindergarten readiness scores than other students on average. Compared to the fall of the pre-K year, spring pre-kindergarten literacy test scores for VPI students were nearly 21 points higher than would be predicted based on just the increasing age of the students. In the fall of the kindergarten year, VPI students fared better than other students on a literacy test, with only 11 percent scoring below the benchmark for kindergarten preparedness, compared to 17 percent of all kindergarteners. The average summed score of VPI students on the fall kindergarten literacy test was three points higher than for non-VPI students. The performance by VPI students on these tests is impressive when it is considered that the VPI students are at-risk children who are in the program due to concerns about their prospects for succeeding in school.*

- The report includes responses from kindergarten teachers and school principals regarding the impact of participation in VPI from their perspectives:
  - More than 80 percent of principals surveyed said that preschool “substantially increased” at-risk students’ social and academic ability;
  - More than 91 percent of principals surveyed said that the positive effects of students’ participation in preschool continue through at least first grade; and more than 60 percent of principals surveyed said that the positive effects continue through at least the third grade.

□ **FINDINGS OF THE PRESCHOOL PILOT REPORT**

- The 2007 General Assembly allocated \$1.7 million in fiscal year 2008 for Preschool Pilots. The Preschool Pilots served as a feasibility study of model strategies for quality preschool network delivery during 2007-2008. They built on the strengths of existing programs and strived to address the barriers to serving all eligible children. The initiative focused on increasing the quality of and access to Virginia’s preschool programs. Since a key barrier to full Virginia Preschool Initiative participation identified in many communities is the lack of school placements (Start Strong

Council, 2006), a central focus of the pilot was on public-private partnerships to expand the Virginia Preschool Initiative more fully into local community preschools.

- The Preschool Pilots were a one-time, year-long project to test innovative strategies for models of high quality preschool network delivery. Eligibility for a Preschool Pilot grant was limited by the 2007 Appropriation Act language to include only those school divisions that had existing partnerships with private and/or nonprofit providers as of the FY 2007 school year.
- The Preschool Pilot projects were required to:
  - use both public and private provider settings for the preschool services;
  - form and use a local collaboration leadership team;
  - evaluate the pilot providers using the Quality Standards checklist recommended by the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER); and
  - participate in the Virginia Department of Education’s evaluation of the initiative.
- Examples of the innovative strategies tested include:
  - braiding funding sources;
  - blending classrooms by partnering with private and federally funded programs;
  - using a single point of entry to enroll children in preschool in a community;
  - emphasizing preschool staff professional development; and
  - using nontraditional provider settings such as home-based providers.
- A research team from Virginia Tech evaluated the innovative strategies for models of high quality preschool network delivery that were being tested by the Preschool Pilot projects.

**TABLE 6. Preschool Pilot Participation**

<b>Divisions that were Identified as Eligible to Apply for Preschool Pilot Grant Funds*</b>	<b>Participating Divisions/Localities</b>	<b>Number of Additional Eligible Students Served</b>
Albemarle County	County of Albemarle	12
Alexandria City	Alexandria Department of Human Services	35
Alleghany County	Alleghany County Public Schools	24
Bath County	Bath County Public Schools	5
Chesapeake City	Chesapeake City Public Schools	10
Fairfax County	Fairfax County Office for Children	65
Fauquier County	Did Not Apply	
Fredericksburg City	Did Not Apply	
Hampton City	Hampton City Public Schools	90
Highland County	Highland County Public Schools	3
Richmond County	Richmond County Public Schools	6
Virginia Beach City	Virginia Beach City Public Schools	20
<b>TOTAL COUNT: 12</b>	<b>TOTAL COUNT: 10</b>	<b>TOTAL: 270</b>

\*2007 Appropriation Act language stated that only those school divisions that had existing partnerships with private and/or nonprofit providers as of the 2006-2007 school year were eligible for participation in the pilot program.

- A preliminary evaluation report for the Preschool Pilot was delivered to the General Assembly on December 1, 2007. The final evaluation report for the Preschool Pilot was delivered to the General Assembly in the fall of 2008. The major findings are listed below.
  - Findings indicate that diverse preschool delivery is associated with documented benefits to children. The pilot increased access to at-risk children by 2 percent statewide. After adding students through the pilot initiative, the participating localities increased their VPI participation rates by 10.2 percent.
  - Programs met between 7 and 10 of 10 National Institute of Early Education Research (NIEER) program standards, with teacher qualification the most variable. The state’s preschool program met 7 of the total possible score of 10 according to NIEER’s 2007 state preschool report.
  - Students attending pilot classrooms significantly increased their overall preliteracy and early numeracy counting skills from fall to spring.
  - Blended classrooms performed similarly to classrooms with all pilot VPI students on preacademic and social skill measures.
- The final report notes that the Pilot demonstrated that diverse preschool delivery is feasible and appears associated with benefits for children at-risk for school difficulties, such as narrowing the preliteracy achievement gap with more advantaged children. State guidelines and funding for staff positions and technical support appear to be necessary to help localities blend funding, oversee programs, improve and

maintain quality, and accurately collect records. These factors will be important to successfully develop a mixed delivery model of high-quality preschool programs for at-risk children in Virginia.